

Dr. Lisa Caruso  
Chief Executive Officer, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater New Haven

H.B. 6659 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR  
THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2025, AND MAKING  
APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Appropriations Committee  
February 23, 2023

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representative Exum,  
Representative Paris, Senator Berthel and Representative Nuccio.

I am writing in support of H.B. 6659, which includes appropriations to continue the support of the Neighborhood Youth Center Grant program. However, we would like the Committee to consider increasing the Governor's budget for the Neighborhood Youth Center line item from \$613,866 to \$1,000,000.

Boys & Girls Clubs across Connecticut have benefited from the Neighborhood Youth Center grant program to support school-age, at-risk youth through academic enrichment, mentoring, prevention services, and skill-building programs. Since the pandemic, Boys & Girls Clubs have seen an increase in the need for services in communities across the state and have increased our statewide footprint, focused on serving more youth and expanding programming services to engage more teens.

It is my great honor and privilege to have been selected as the first ever Chief Executive Officer of Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater New Haven. Our organization was created in Summer 2022 as the result of a merger between Boys & Girls Clubs of New Haven and the Ulbrich Boys & Girls Clubs of North Haven and Wallingford. Each of these legacy Clubs contributed an extraordinary legacy of positivity, mentorship, safety, and service over the course of many decades. Throughout the 2021-22 academic year and the summer of 2022, Boys & Girls Clubs served 1,380 children in New Haven, North Haven, and Wallingford. In 2023 and beyond, we are excited to serve children and families as a unified organization across these three municipalities, and we are eager to continue to build and grow our impact in this corner of our state.

Boys & Girls Clubs provide a safe place to go afterschool and in the summer. Clubs relentlessly focus on the conditions necessary for youth to learn, grow and thrive. Because of this, outcomes data from Clubs affirm that Club youth graduate with a plan for the future, become leaders and change agents and make decisions that promote their health and wellness.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater New Haven receives Neighborhood Youth Center funds through the Connecticut Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs (the Alliance), a statewide

entity serving all Boys & Girls Clubs in Connecticut. The Alliance consists of 15 Club Organizations operating 50 Club sites and collectively serves 25,000 youth in 22 towns and cities. Through the Neighborhood Youth Center Grant, Clubs partner with the Alliance to consistently implement programs designed to help youth close the academic achievement gap, make positive decisions and develop future leaders. This program enables Clubs to extend and reinforce what is being taught in school.

An investment in the Neighborhood Youth Center grant program is an investment in the Boys & Girls Clubs. A 2015 study by the Institute for Social Research and the School of Public Health at the University of Michigan found that for every \$1 invested in a Boys & Girls Club, \$9.60 in economic benefits are returned to the individual and society. Please consider supporting an increase in Neighborhood Youth Center grant program and let's continue in our mission of building "Great Futures" for the youth of Connecticut.